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From: Energy & Commerce Committee

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June 4, 2002

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The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEB - 5 2003

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Dear Chairman Powell:

We are writing about the Federal Communication Commission's (the "Commission") rule which prohibits the common ownership of a broadcast station and a daily newspaper in the same market, otherwise known as the "newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership rule" (the "rule"). For the reasons indicated below, we support repeal of the rule, and we urge the Commission to expeditiously complete the rulemaking process it initiated in this matter last September.

Without a doubt, there have been dramatic changes in the media marketplace since 1975 when the rule was adopted by the Commission. As noted in the Commission's Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking last September, when the rule was first adopted, there were 7,785 radio stations, 952 television stations, three major broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC), cable television systems served 13 per cent of television households, direct broadcast satellite (DBS) providers were nonexistent, and the Internet was not commercially available.

Today, there are approximately 12,900 radio stations, 1,600 full power television stations, 2,390 low power television stations, and 230 Class A television stations. There are now four major broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox), along with other emerging broadcast networks (e.g., UPN and WB). Today, cable television systems serve approximately 70 per cent of television households (with over 200 video programming services available on such systems, including significant news programming). Today, DBS is serving approximately 15 per cent of multichannel video programming distribution (MVPD) households. Moreover, today, the Internet also has become a significant source of local and national news for many Americans.

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We believe this explosion of media sources should eliminate my concern regarding a lack of diversity of views in the marketplace and competition, which have been the principal justifications for the rule. Since initiating its rulemaking process last September, numerous broadcasters, trade associations, and public interest groups, along with more than 1400 individuals, have filed comments and reply comments in the proceeding. We would note that the vast majority of commenters advocate repeal of the rule.

In light of the foregoing, we believe repeal of the rule is long overdue, and we urge the Commission to complete its rulemaking as expeditiously as possible. We thank you for your attention to our views in this regard and look forward to your response detailing the Commission's progress on this front.

Sincerely,



W.J. "Billy" Tauzin

Chairman

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Fred Upton

Chairman

Subcommittee on Telecommunications
and the Internet